



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0633, **Version:** 2

Registrar of Voters recommending the following:

- 1) Receive a presentation on the benefits of implementing Voter Centers in El Dorado County; and
- 2) Authorize and approve the Registrar of Voters to implement the Voter's Choice Act to implement Vote Center elections in the County, including performing all activities required in the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), starting with the 2020 elections; and
- 3) Provide direction to staff to return to the Board with a contract with one of the State-certified vendors to purchase a voting system that utilizes the Vote Center model. (Est. Time: 1 Hr.)

FUNDING: State and Federal Funding with a maximum General Fund match of \$757,000.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

In 2016, the State of California passed the Voter's Choice Act, Senate Bill 450 (SB450), allowing counties to conduct elections by vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot while also providing regional Vote Centers to be open 10 days prior to Election Day through close of voting on Election Day.

In order to determine voters' interest in this new Vote Center model, the Registrar and staff have presented the Vote Center model to several community organizations receiving very positive feedback. Additionally, the elections department assembled a Voting System Selection Committee (VSSC) comprised of various members of the community and county staff to select a new voting system. That committee was also introduced to the vote center model and unanimously voted in favor of El Dorado County adopting the Voter's Choice Act.

The Elections Department also completed a cost benefit analysis to determine the fiscal impact to the County and found the new voting system cost utilizing the Vote Center model will cost approximately 48% less (\$600,000) than a precinct model, while the cost of running an election will be approximately 2.5% higher (\$7,000 per election). There are changes being proposed to the VCA that would reduce the cost of running elections in El Dorado County over time. There is also a movement at the state Legislature that will transition the state to the VCA model.

The Legislation requires one (1) - 3 day vote center for every 50,000 voters (requiring 3 in El Dorado County), and one (1) - 4 day Center for every 10,000 voters (requiring a total of 13 vote centers in El Dorado County). Additionally, the County is required to provide one (1) Ballot Drop Box per 15,000 voters (requiring 9 in El Dorado County).

The VCA model provides benefits and a better voting opportunity to the voters of El Dorado County by providing more opportunities to vote. Every voter receives a mail ballot (we currently already mail ballots to ~ 80% of voters), they can return that ballot by postage-paid mail, drop their ballot at any Vote Center or Drop Box, vote at any Vote center up to 10 days prior to election day, or conditionally register to vote and vote at any Vote Center.

On March 3, 2019 the Board authorized the Elections Department to include in the 19-20

Recommended Budget an appropriation of \$1,514,000 with up to \$757,000 General Fund match (50%) for the purchase of a new voting system. (Legistar 19-0250)

ALTERNATIVES

The Board could not authorize the implementation of Vote Centers, thereby resulting in the current precinct model for elections. A new voting system will still be needed, but the purchase cost would be 48% (\$600,000) higher.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

N/A

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

N/A

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

It is recommended that the Board approve this item.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Recommended Budget for Elections for FY 2019-20 will include appropriations of \$1,514,000 for the purchase of a new voting system, with a maximum General Fund match of \$757,000.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

N/A

CONTACT

Bill O'Neill
Registrar of Voters